

Message Text

SECRET

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43

ACTION SS-30

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R 301055Z SEP 74

FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7891

S E C R E T PHNOM PENH 13104

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PGOV, CB

SUBJECT: LON NON

REF: A. STATE 213161

 B. PHNOM PENH 12726

 C. PHNOM PENH 12847

 D. PHNOM PENH 12874

1. SINCE HIS RETURN TO PHNOM PENH, LON NON HAS MADE NO SECRET OF HIS INTENTIONS. AT MEETING WITH DCM SEPT. 26 (MEMCON POUCHED EA/LC) HE SAID HIS CURRENT EFFORT IS TO MEET WITH A LARGE NUMBER OF KHMER PERSONALITIES IN CAPITAL TO INFORM HIMSELF ABOUT THE DOMESTIC SITUATION OF THE COUNTRY. HE SAID HE THEN PLANS TO VISIT A NUMBER OF MILITARY COMMANDERS AROUND THE CAPITAL AREA, FOLLOWING WHICH HE INTENDS TO TRAVEL TO MOST OF THE PROVINCIAL CAPITALS AND ENCLAVES. LON NON DESCRIBED THESE SAME PLANS IN SUBSEQUENT ENCOUNTER WITH AARMA WHO WAS HIS ESCORT IN U.W. FANK-IN-C GENERAL SOSTHENE FERNANDEZ TOLD CHIEF, MEDTC THAT LON NON HAD TOLD HIM OF HIS PLAN TO VISIT MILITARY COMMANDERS. NEEDLESS TO SAY, SOSTHENE IS ENTIRELY OPPOSED TO IDEA AND ASKED OUR VIEWS. CHIEF, MEDTC TOLD SOSTHENE WE SHARED HIS OPPOSITION AND WE COULD NOT CONDONE USE OF MAP-SUPPLIED AIRCRAFT TO FERRY LON NON ON POLITICAL JAUNTS AROUND COUNTRY. SOME MILITARY COMMANDERS (E.G. DIEN DEL AND VONG SARENDY) HAVE TOLD US LON NON WOULD NOT BE WELCOME ON THEIR TURF.

2. THERE HAVE BEEN THE INEVITABLE RUMORS IN TOWN TO THE EFFECT THAT LON NON'S RETURN MUST HAVE BEEN OUR IDEA, AS IT IS KNOWN WE

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GOT HIM SENT OUT OF COUNTRY AND HE WOULD NOT HAVE RETURNED WITHOUT

OUR BLESSING. IT IS RUMORED THAT AMBASSADOR MET WITH LON NON IN PARIS LAST MONTH AND APPROVED HIS RETURN HERE. WE HAVE NO DOUBT THAT LON NON HAS NOT DISCOURAGED SPECULATION THAT HE IS SOMEHOW OUR CHOSEN INSTRUMENT TO RESCUE SITUATION HERE. IN ALL OF OUR CONTACTS WITH GKR PERSONALITIES, PRESS AND DIPLOMATICS WE HAVE MADE IT CLEAR THAT ALLEGED MEETING WITH AMBASSADOR IS A MYTH, THAT LON NON'S RETURN WAS AGAINST OUR WISHES AND ADVICE, AND WE DO NOT SEE ANY ROLE FOR HIM HERE OTHER THAN THAT OF PRIVATE CITIZEN VISITING HIS FAMILY IN PHNOM PENH. THIS WORD IS GETTING AROUND, AND WHILE IT WON'T PLEASE LON NON IT MAY ASSIST IN DEFLATING HIS EFFORT TO INJECT HIMSELF INTO THE POLITICAL SCENE.

3. IN MEETING WITH THAI PRESSMEN SEPT. 26, PRESIDENT LON NOL TOLD THEM (SEE FBIS BANGKOK 281601Z SEP 74) THAT RETURN OF LON NON QUOTE HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS IN CAMBODIA AND HIS RETURN IS A NORMAL PROCEDURE. HE IS CONSIDERED AN ORDINARY PERSON RETURNING FROM AN OFFICIAL TRIP ABROAD. UNQUOTE. AMBASSADOR INTENDS TO REFER TO THIS STATEMENT WHEN HE NEXT SEES LON NOL TO SUPPORT POINT THAT AS FAR AS WE ARE CONCERNED LON NON IS HERE AS A PRIVATE CITIZEN AND SHOULD BEHAVE AS ONE, INSTEAD OF SOWING DISSENTION IN THE RANKS OF THE GKR BY AMBITIOUS POLITICKING AROUND THE COUNTRYSIDE.

4. COUP RUMORS AND OTHER SPECULATION CIRCULATED BY PRESS HAVE DOUBTLESS BEEN STIMULATED BY LON NON'S RETURN AND EFFORTS BY HIS SUPPORTERS TO PROJECT HIM ON POLITICAL STAGE. ONE PAPER HAS CALLED FOR HIS INSTALLATION AS VICE PRESIDENT, BUT LON NON LATER DENIED TO PRESS THAT HE WISHED BECOME V-P. COUNTERING ALL THIS SPECULATION WOULD BE A FULL-TIME JOB FOR WHICH WE DO NOT HAVE THE TIME, BUT WE BELIEVE WE HAVE SUCCEEDED IN KILLING THE IDEA THAT USG ENVISAGES A ROLE HERE FOR LON NON. HE WILL CONTINUE TO CAUSE TROUBLE FOR US, AND AT A TIME WHEN WE COULD DO WITHOUT HIS DISRUPTIONS, BUT SO LONG AS PEOPLE REALIZE HE IS HERE AGAINST OUR WISHES, HE WILL HAVE HARD TIME GETTING VERY FAR WITH HIS MACHINATIONS.

DEAN

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NNN

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